

*Just jump your blues
away!*

Blues, Boogie, and Bop



*Albert Ammons
Helen Humes
Jay McShann
Eddie Vinson
Roy Byrd
Buddy Rich
Cootie Williams*

*the best of the 1940s
mercury sessions*

*Look at these
sidemen
on various tracks*

*Walter Page • Red Rodney
Clark Terry • Willis Jackson
Teddy Wilson*



This is a one-volume selection from Blues, Boogie, and Bop: The 1940s Mercury Sessions, the seven-CD set celebrating Mercury Records' fiftieth anniversary. This sampler presents the best sixteen tracks culled from the complete cache of 172. Fourteen different sessions are represented here, with such sidemen as Willis "Gator Tail" Jackson, Red Rodney, Clark Terry, and Teddy Wilson.

Highlights include three performances by the king of boogie woogie piano, Albert Ammons; two from the still-active Jay McShann, the bandleader who helped to put Kansas City on the jazz map; early jump-blues classics by Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, showcasing his distinctive vocals; two Buddy Rich tracks, among his earliest dates as a leader; and a couple from a certain Roy Byrd of New Orleans — who would be far better known years later as Professor Longhair.

Blues, Boogie, and Bop

the best of the 1940s mercury sessions



- | | |
|--|------|
| 1 Albert Ammons and His Rhythm Kings Margie | 2:38 |
| 2 Mr. Bell Boogie | 2:57 |
| 3 Oh, Lady, Be Good! | 2:33 |
| 4 Helen Humes with Buck Clayton's Orchestra Today I Sing the Blues | 2:55 |
| 5 Jet Propelled Papa* | 2:44 |
| 6 Jay McShann and His Sextet Bucktown Boogie* | 2:56 |
| 7 Voodoo Woman Blues | 2:37 |
| 8 Eddie Vinson and His Orchestra Kidney Stew Blues | 3:00 |
| 9 Wandering Mind Blues | 2:27 |
| 10 Lazy Gal | 2:48 |
| 11 Roy Byrd and His Blues Jumpers Hadaool Bounce | 2:62 |
| 12 Longhair Stomp | 2:45 |
| 13 Buddy Rich and His Orchestra Quiet Riot | 2:51 |
| 14 Rich-ual Dance | 3:09 |
| 15 Cootie Williams and His Orchestra 'Gator Tail, part 1 | 3:08 |
| 16 Mercenary Papa | 2:14 |

*Previously unissued

File under: Jazz



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Albert Ammos photograph courtesy of Duncan P. Schliedt collection

Mercury Records — The Early Years

Mercury Records was founded by Berle Adams, Irving Green, and Arthur Talmage in the autumn of 1945 in Chicago, shortly after World War II. Its official name was the Mercury Record Corporation.

The first president of the company was Adams, who proposed its formation in the first place. At that time Adams was working for the Chicago branch of the New York-based booking agency, General Amusement Corporation, and he was well known in the business as the manager and right-hand man of popular entertainer Louis Jordan. A top-notch talent scout, Adams displayed his abilities at Mercury by fostering popular African-American artists, starting with Dinah Washington and Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson.

Green had been the manager of a record-pressing plant in the suburbs of Chicago. Arthur Talmage was originally a graphic designer who was also a music fan. At Mercury, he became one of the first producers while doubling as the art director. Then, a few months after its inception, the company was looking for an accountant. Fresh home from serving in the war and still clad in his military uniform, Erwin Steinberg knocked on Mercury's door, thought the position "interesting", and was immediately accepted upon applying for the job. That was in January 1946.

The foundation of the brand-new company was complete. Fired up with youthful ambition, the four young men set about deciding on their musical direction. At the time, the recording industry was ruled by three companies: RCA, Columbia, and Decca; with the addition of the newly formed Capitol Records, they had a virtual monopoly on the popular talent of the period.

In order to rival the major labels, Mercury had to find its niche. Adams had strong connections with African-American entertainers, so the company gravitated toward rhythm and blues and jazz. In the Forties, Chicago was a mecca for all types of blues, and already such labels as Chess and Vee Jay had been established since the end of the war.

Washington and Eddie Vinson signed exclusive deals with Mercury, the latter recording his debut on December 11, 1945. Washington's first session was in the following January.

One of Mercury's discoveries recorded his first million-seller in August 1946. The song was "That's My Desire", and it was by a singer named Frankie Laine.

On the wings of this success, Mercury produced in 1949 the million-selling records "Again" by Vic Damone and "Mule Train" by Laine. In 1950, Patti Page's "Tennessee Waltz" logged sales of more than two million, and now Mercury had become competitive with the other labels. It had a string of big hits in the Fifties with a vocal group, the Platters.

With this as its base, Mercury launched production and promotion of new music in the jazz-record market with confidence. At that time, its popular 78 rpm records were released mainly through the 5000 series; however, the jazz recordings — including blues, boogie, and bop — started with the catalog number 8000. Between its inception in 1945 and the end of the decade, Mercury released a wide range of jazz sessions led by such artists as Erroll Garner, Vinson, and Washington, blues vocalists Walter Brown, Roy Byrd (who later became known as Professor Longhair), Helen Humes, and Sippie Wallace, boogie woogie and blues-piano giant Albert Ammons, legendary Kansas City bandleader Jay McShann, and stalwart soloists Buddy Rich and Cootie Williams.

This year, Mercury Records celebrates its Fiftieth anniversary with the release of a seven-CD, 172-track package entitled *Mercury Jazz*, a compendium of hitherto uncollected recordings, particularly from the historic 8000 series. With this release, the entirety of Mercury's early jazz recordings are available to the public.

The sixteen songs presented here are the quintessence of Mercury Records' history.

Blues, Boogie, and Bop: the best of the 1940s mercury sessions

	MSTR. NO. & TAKE	MERCURY 78 ISSUE	TIME
1 Margie (Con Conrad-Davis-J. Russell Robinson)	1281	8205	2:38
Albert Ammons and His Rhythm Kings: Ammons (p) with Ike Perkins (g); Israel Crosby (b); Jump Jackson (dm). * Recorded probably 1948 in Chicago			
2 Mr. Bell Boogie (Hattie Young)	1363	8115	2:57
Albert Ammons and His Rhythm Kings: Ammons (p) with probably Ike Perkins (g); Israel Crosby (b); Jump Jackson (dm). Recorded probably late 1948 in Chicago			
3 Oh, Lady, Be Good! (George and Ira Gershwin)	329-3	8115	2:33
Albert Ammons and His Rhythm Kings: Ammons (p) with Ike Perkins (g); Israel Crosby (b); Jack Cooley (dm). Recorded April 8, 1946 in Chicago			
4 Today I Sing the Blues (Curtis R. Lewis-Helen Humes)	1644-3	8077	2:55
Helen Humes and Buck Clayton's Orchestra: Humes (vcl) with Clayton (tp) and Scoville Brown (cl); Rudy Williams (ts); Teddy Wilson (p); Mundell Lowe (g); Jimmy Butts (b); unknown (dm). Recorded December 31, 1947 in New York City			
5 Jet Propelled Papa (Helen Humes-Williams)	859-4	8047	2:44
Helen Humes and Buck Clayton's Orchestra: Humes (vcl) with Clayton (tp) and George Matthews (tb); John Hardee (ts); Ram Ramirez (p); Mundell Lowe (g); Walter Page (b); Jo Jones (dm). Recorded June 24, 1947 in New York City			
6 Bucktown Boogie (Britton-James Columbus "Jay" McShann)	455-2	8020	2:56
7 Voodoo Woman Blues	457-2	8020	2:37
(Claude Demetrius-James "Jimmy" Witherspoon) Jay McShann and His Sextet: McShann (p) with unknown (tb); Theodore Smalls (as); Seeward Evans (ts); Percy Gabriel (b); Jesse Price (dm). Tracks 7: Add Jimmy Witherspoon (vcl). Recorded September 3, 1946 in Los Angeles			
8 Kidney Stew Blues (Leona Blackman)	634	8028	3:00
Eddie Vinson and His Orchestra: John Hunt (tp); Vinson (as, vcl); Lee Pope (ts); Greely Walton (bs); Earl Van Riper (p); Leonard "Heavy" Swain (b); George "Butch" Ballard (dm). Recorded November 18, 1946 at WOR Studios, New York City			
9 Wandering Mind Blues (Bernard-Coleman)	1121	8067	2:27
Eddie Vinson and His Orchestra: John Hunt (tp); Vinson (as, vcl); Lee Pope (ts); Greely Walton (bs); Earl Van Riper (p); Leonard "Heavy" Swain (b); George "Butch" Ballard (dm). Recorded June 26, 1947 in New York City			

10 Lazy Gal (Jesse Mae Robinson-Williams)	800	8039	2:48
Eddie Vinson and His Orchestra: Vinson (as, vcl) with probably John Hunt (tp); Lee Pope (ts); Greely Walton (bs); Earl Van Riper (p); Leonard "Heavy" Swain (b); George "Butch" Ballard (dm). Recorded April 16, 1947 at WOR Studios, New York City			
11 Hadacol Bounce (Henry Roeland "Roy" Byrd aka "Professor Longhair")	7820	8184	3:02
12 Longhair Stomp (Roy Byrd)	7821	unissued	2:45
Roy Byrd and His Blues Jumpers: Byrd (p) with George Miller (b); Louis Joseph (dm). Track 12: Add Byrd (vcl) and Walter "Papoose" Nelson (g). Recorded September 8, 1949 in New Orleans			
13 Quiet Riot (Brooks-Castle-Bernard "Buddy" Rich)	361	3017	2:51
Buddy Rich and His Orchestra: Rich (dm) with Tommy Allison, Bitsy Mullens, Lou Oles, Pinky Savitt, Carl Warwick (tp); Al Lorraine, Johnny Mandel, Earl Swope (tb); Les Clark, Aaron Sachs (as); George Berg, Mickey Rich (ts); Sid Brown (bs); Tony Nichols (p); Jimmy Johnson (b); Eddie Finckel (arr). Recorded April 25, 1946 in New York City			
14 Rich-ual Dance (Eddie Finckel)	532	3038	3:09
Buddy Rich and His Orchestra: Rich (d) with Tommy Allison, Bitsy Mullens, Red Rodney, Pinky Savitt (tp); Al Lorraine, Johnny Mandel, Earl Swope (tb); Les Clark, Jerry Therkeld (as); George Berg, Mickey Rich (ts); Sid Brown (bs); Tony Nichols (p); Jimmy Johnson (b); Eddie Finckel (arr). Recorded September 1946 in New York City			
15 'Gator Tail, part 1	2554	8131	3:08
(Willis "Gator Tail" Jackson-Charles Melvin "Cootie" Williams) Cootie Williams and His Orchestra: Williams (tp) with Bob Merrill (tp); Rupert Cole (as); Willis Jackson (ts); Lester Fauntleroy (p); Leonard "Heavy" Swain (b); Gus Johnson (dm). Recorded March 2, 1949 in New York City			
16 Mercenary Papa (composer unknow)	2983-4	8168	2:14
Cootie Williams and His Orchestra: Williams (tp) with Willis Jackson (ts) and Eddie Mack (vcl). Personnel includes probably: Bob Merrill (tp); Rupert Cole (as); Lester Fauntleroy (p); Leonard "Heavy" Swain (b); Gus Johnson (dm). Recorded September 20, 1949 at unknown location			

These recordings were transferred from disc sources. Surface noise is audible.

Helen Humes sessions produced by John Hammond

These selections are also available on the seven-CD set *Blues, Boogie, and Bop: The 1940s Mercury Sessions* 314 525 609-2



Jay McShann photograph from the collection of Gilles Petard courtesy of Showtime Archives

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Executive producer: **Richard Seidel** and **Kazu Yanagida**

This is a joint production between Mercury Music Entertainment Co., Ltd (Japan) and Verve Records (a division of PolyGram Classics & Jazz)

a brief history of verve and mercury

The jazz record labels Verve and Mercury have run along distinct yet parallel paths reaching back the last half century.

Although **Norman Granz** founded Verve in 1956 (incorporating his early Fifties labels, Clef and Norgran), he had been producing and recording jazz concerts since 1944. With the advent of the LP four years later, he licensed some performances to Mercury Records, which had been started in 1945 by **Irving Green**, a former booking agent, and **Berle Adams**, the son of a plastics manufacturer.

Since it had its own pressing plant, Mercury quickly became a major label, diversifying in the Fifties with first the new rock & roll and then country music. Its EmArcy division, primarily under the leadership of **Bob Shad**, boasted an impressive roster of jazz and r&b greats — supervised by African-American a&r talents **Clyde Otis** and **Quincy Jones**.

Both labels were sold in 1961, Verve to MGM and Mercury to Dutch-owned Philips. The companies continued to produce great jazz in the Sixties. Mercury then maintained its rank among the top labels in pop, country, and r&b in the Seventies and early Eighties, before the CD and the reemergence of jazz catalog as commercially viable. PolyGram has been the beneficiary ever since of this largesse — the recorded legacies of two great jazz labels, Verve and Mercury.

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ALBERT AMMONS (1907–1949) — pianist, composer

Called "the father of boogie piano" and "the king of blues and boogie-woogie piano", he was very active musically from the Thirties into the Forties. He participated in the legendary "Spirituals to Swing" concert at Carnegie Hall in 1938. Father of tenor saxophonist Gene Ammons (1925–1974), the Chicago-born pianist began his recording career in 1936 with Decca and was under exclusive contract to Mercury at the time of his passing on December 5, 1949.

HELEN HUMES (1913–1981) — vocalist

A member of the Count Basie Orchestra from the late Thirties until the beginning of the Forties. She became well known, along with Jimmy Rushing, as the orchestra's star vocalist (she was the successor to Billie Holiday after the latter's departure in 1938).

From 1947 to 1948, Humes recorded four sessions (fourteen songs) for Mercury. One of the sessions was led by trumpeter Buck Clayton, his first time in that role.

JAY MCSHANN (b. 1916) — pianist, composer

From the Thirties to the Forties, McShann's band, which for a time boasted Charlie Parker on alto saxophone, was as well known in Kansas City as the Count Basie Orchestra. An acclaimed blues pianist and competent singer, McShann is also known as the composer of such classics as "Hootie Blues" and "Confessin' the Blues". This rare performance for Mercury, from the latter part of the Forties, has never been reissued. McShann's recordings from this period (1946–1951) featured such as artists as blues vocalist Jimmy Witherspoon.

EDDIE VINSON (1917–1968) — alto saxophone, vocalist

One of the founding fathers of r&b, and master of the various traditions of blues, boogie, and shuffle too, he made his recording debut with Mercury Records and had a big hit with "Kidney Stew Blues". Vinson's alto-sax performance on *Wandering Mind Blues* is testament to Charlie Parker's widespread influence in the latter part of the Forties.

ROY BYRD (PROFESSOR LONGHAIR) (1918–1980) — pianist, vocalist

The New Orleans-born pioneer, his successors include Fats Domino, Allen Toussaint, and Dr. John. After starting out as a street musician, Byrd formed the group, Professor Longhair and the Shuffling Hungarians in 1949; they made their recording debut on the local Star Talent label. His band subsequently recorded nine songs for Mercury as Roy Byrd and the Blues Jumpers; "Bald Head" became a hit. Already a New Orleans legend by the Sixties, in the Seventies Byrd made the leap to international fame, performing at many jazz festivals. His piano and vocal performance style as heard with the Blues Jumpers is a gumbo-like blend of jazz, blues, boogie woogie, shuffle, and calypso. *Longhair Stomp* is an instrumental number featuring boogie woogie-style piano.

BUDDY RICH (1917–1987) — drummer, vocalist

Buddy Rich's genius as a drummer has been immortalized. He made his recording debut at Mercury with a full-scale bebop band, doing "Dateless Brown" and "Desperate Desmond". His early sessions featuring Earl Swope on trombone and Red Rodney on trumpet are historically valuable, and a rare performance, *Rich-ual Dance* (on CD for the first time), puts the spotlight on his fantastic drum-solo performance.

COOTIE WILLIAMS (1911–1985) — trumpeter

He played with the Duke Ellington Orchestra from 1929 to 1940, and again from 1962 until the late Seventies. After his first Ellington stint, he went out on his own, leading a small combo in the Forties known for introducing a young Bud Powell and Eddie Vinson as well as the compositions of Thelonious Monk. In the late Forties, his powerful performances began to emphasize more r&b, and he left behind a legacy of many exciting recordings on Mercury. *Gator Tail, part 1* features tenor saxophonist Willis Jackson, who himself later became a big star. It is a hit number very representative of the Gator's style at the time.

Kiyoshi "Boxman" Koyama
June 1995

the 1940s mercury sessions

Albert Ammons • Helen Humes • Jay McShann • Eddie Vinson
Roy Byrd • Buddy Rich • Cootie Williams



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172 tracks — many previously unissued,
many more on CD for the first time.
The 80-page booklet includes extensive notes and
many photographs of the musicians.



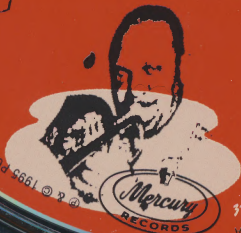
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